

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, February 24, 2012

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Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Reminder: Common Core author David Coleman to visit Rhode Island on Wednesday

One of the top priorities in our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, is establishing world-class standards and assessments. To that end, we are moving forward rapidly with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and with the development of our new state assessments, the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers).

To date, 4,100 educators in Rhode Island have participated in a *Study of the Standards* session, which will prepare our teachers and school leaders for the transition to the Common Core. Our overall goal with this training is to create a deep level of understanding and a sense of urgency and commitment for teachers and principals. We want Rhode Island educators to engage in an ongoing study of the standards that will guide the work in every classroom, every day, in every school in Rhode Island.

As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, David Coleman, one of the lead writers of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), will come to Rhode Island on **Wednesday** (February 29) to share his experience and his perspective with us. I would certainly expect that the leadership from every LEA in our state would want to take the opportunity to engage in conversation with Mr. Coleman about this important initiative.

Mr. Coleman will lead a conversation among district and higher-education leaders called “A Call to Action: State and Local Readiness for CCSS and PARCC,” on February 29, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., here at RIDE (80 Washington St./255 Westminster St., Providence). If you cannot attend that conversation but would like to hear Mr. Coleman, he will hold a conversation for a more general audience of educators on February 29, from 4 to 5:30 p.m., at the Rhode Island College Student Union Memorial Ballroom, 600 Mount Pleasant Ave., Providence. To register for either session, go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DavidColeman-February29-RSVP>

I hope that you and others on your team will take advantage of this opportunity to hear from one of the authors of the Common Core standards.

For a link to a flier on this event, go to:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/DavidColeman-Feb29_Flier.pdf

2. Districts to receive communications for families on Diploma System

As you may be aware, the Rhode Island ACLU and several other advocacy groups held a news conference this week to decry the provision in our Diploma System that requires students to attain at least the level of “partially proficient” on our NECAP assessments in mathematics and reading in order to graduate. Though I would never want to base a graduation decision on one piece of data, I support the inclusion of NECAP assessments within our Diploma System, and I believe that a score of partially proficient is a measure of the *minimum* level of skills that our students will need to succeed in college and careers. Some have argued that we should not bar students from graduating based on a test score. I believe that we have to make sure the diplomas our students receive are meaningful and, more important, we have to continue working together to provide our students with the knowledge and skills that they need for success. I am confident that, with sufficient resources and support, our students can make sufficient progress on the NECAP assessments and graduate with a meaningful diploma.

As you distribute to the families in your district the student-level 2011 NECAP reports, you may anticipate questions about test scores and graduation requirements. As I noted to you last week in the Field Memo, we are drafting templates for letters that you can send to families regarding the NECAP assessments and the provisions of the Rhode Island Diploma System. We intend to have these letters ready for you by the end of next week.

From RIDE:

3. Model School grant deadline extended to April 27

Please see this notice for our Office of Multiple Pathways:

RIDE is extending the Model School grant applications deadline to Friday, **April 27**, at 4 p.m. Originally, we had planned to release a Request For Proposals (RFP) in January on behalf of the model school as well as other schools and entities interested in increasing

student access to technology. The RFP will solicit an “all-inclusive” vendor solution that will include devices with internet access, wireless infrastructure, technical support, and maintenance, as well as professional development. We now anticipate vendor responses to the RFP to be available at the beginning of April. Extending the deadline will allow applying schools to incorporate equipment and infrastructure needs with the budget portion of the grant application.

Grant information and FAQs have been updated on the RIDE website and can be found at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/1to1_home.aspx.

4. RIDE seeks schools to pilot Virtual Learning Math Modules

Please see this notice for our Office of Multiple Pathways:

RIDE is looking for five (5) high Schools or middle Schools to pilot the Virtual Learning Math Modules (VLMMs). The VLMMs are designed to support students’ math proficiency by addressing foundational algebra and geometry math skills in a blended learning environment. Identified students will progress through a series of 6 to 8 assigned online modules supported by the local VLMM team as well as by online tutors.

VLMM is intended to support, not supplant, existing math intervention strategies, and it requires site-based teaching or support and monitoring of student progress. This is one strategy that can be utilized as part of a student’s progress plan to support attainment of math proficiency.

Schools considering being a pilot school should identify a local VLMM team. Members of that team may include a site coordinator, guidance counselor(s), math coaches, math department heads or leads, and select math educators.

Professional development is planned for the beginning of April for local VLMM teams volunteering. Schools should also begin to identify potential students who would benefit from engaging in the math modules. This may include select students in grades 8 through 11 who have not met partial proficiency on the NECAP assessment.

Please contact Lauren McCarthy (lauren.mccarthy@ride.ri.gov) if you are interested in piloting the VLMM in your middle school or high school.

5. RIDE to gather feedback on interim assessments, conduct survey on proposed test content

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

As part of the Race to the Top Interim Assessments project, RIDE will be offering three fixed-form interim assessments, starting in Fall 2012. Together with our vendor, Measured Progress, RIDE has drafted test specifications for mathematics and ELA content in grades 3 through 11. The assessments focus only on the Common Core State

Standards. At this time RIDE would like feedback on the proposed critical areas to be assessed in mathematics (we will seek feedback on English language arts within the next few weeks).

Mathematics educators in grades 3 through 11, as well as other educators with mathematics content knowledge (including curriculum directors, assistant superintendents, department chairs, et al.), are encouraged to participate in a brief webinar on March 6, at 3:30 p.m., followed by a short survey that is due March 14. Most educators would review the test specifications only for their grade and would answer three related questions.

To participate, please do the following:

Review the test specifications for your grade or content area on our website:

www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Interim.aspx

Call into the webinar on March 6 at 3:30pm (218-936-4141; passcode: 8240867; URL: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/958444614>)

If you are unable to participate in the webinar, you can listen to the recording, which will be posted here:

www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Interim.aspx

Complete the Math survey by the end of the day, March 14. The survey is here:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/5H99XRK

The feedback that RIDE receives from this process will be very useful in finalizing the test specifications for the fixed-form interim assessments. It will also ensure that these assessments will be utilized by districts. If you have any questions about the upcoming feedback opportunity, please contact Jessica Brown, by e-mail (Jessica.Brown@RIDE.RI.GOV) or phone (222-8253).

Please share this information with the mathematics educators in your district.

6. *Reminder: Student-enrollment data to be submitted to RIDE by March 14*

Please see this reminder from Carolyn Dias, Chief of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

We appreciate all the efforts you have made - and are making - to provide accurate and timely data to RIDE. As in the past, RIDE collects critical data throughout the year. Student and staff information collected are generally used to measure student, teacher, school, and district performance; to inform management, budget, and policy decisions; and to comply with state and federal reporting mandates.

To ensure the accuracy and timeliness of reporting, please designate the following responsibilities to your key staff members and make sure each of the following is complete by the deadline dates:

- Student enrollment must be uploaded to RIDE by Wednesday, March 14, at 4 p.m.; this data will be used for funding formula calculations.
- Duplicates must be resolved by 10 a.m. on Friday, March 16.
- Signed “ADM - State Calculated,” “Snapshot, as of date 3/14/12,” and “Submission” reports are due by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 16.

Your data are to be submitted for your district and schools through the RIDE Information Services Portal website (<http://www.eride.ri.gov/>). For detailed information, click on State Reporting on the left-hand side; you will see a list of scheduled reports or data that are either open or closed for submission, as well as detailed instructions on how to submit each report.

If you need assistance or require additional information about the reporting requirements, please do not hesitate to contact the RIDE Help Desk, at 222-8400 or helpdesk@ride.ri.gov. Deanna Raphael is the RIDE contact. For program questions, please contact Kristen Cole, at 222-4681 or kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov.

7. Districts invited to join technology working group to prepare for PARCC

Please see this notice from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

As you may know, we will be transitioning from the NECAP to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state assessments in the 2014-15 school year. This new assessment, administered online to students in grades 3 through 11, will require an extraordinary level of technology for all schools in Rhode Island and across the country. To start preparing for this transition, PARCC has contracted with Pearson to develop a Technology Readiness Tool to support states' planning as they transition to next-generation assessments. This new open-source tool will assess current capacity and will compare that with the technology that will be needed to administer the new online assessments in four areas: devices, device-to-tester ratio, network infrastructure, and staff and personnel.

The goal of the first data collection window is to collect easily accessible baseline data. A committee consisting of technology personnel from Cranston, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Westerly, and Woonsocket will be working to present a schedule, over a minimum 8-week period, that lessens intrusion of the ongoing work of the technology departments. Other districts that would like to join us are welcome.

More information will be forthcoming as it becomes available to us. If you have any questions, you can contact, Michael Ferry, at michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov or 222-8258.

8. Training offered to districts on recruiting platforms

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

School Spring has been working with many school districts to set up recruiting platforms. There will be another group training held at the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative. Julie Hanagan will be sending the invite below to districts that are now signing on. She would also like to extend this invitation to any districts that would like a refresher on the system.

School Spring-RIDE In-Person Training Session Invitation Recruiting Platforms

Where: The Northern Rhode Island Collaborative
640 George Washington Highway, Suite 200, Lincoln 02865

When: Monday, March 12, from 1 – 3 p.m.

Presenter: Julie Hanagan
Executive Trainer at SchoolSpring
julie@schoolspring.com
978-621-5082
R.S.V.P to Julie by Thursday, March 9
E-mail julie@schoolspring.com

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891.

9. Induction Coach positions to be available, principals to receive survey on induction

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We appreciate all of the support and feedback you have provided throughout this first year of implementing the Induction Program. Thank you for your continued dedication in supporting beginning teachers in your districts.

Recently, upon request, we have been presenting at school committees, at institutions of higher education, and at superintendent staff meetings with principals. Each time we present, we bring an Induction Coach, a beginning teacher, and a principal, all of whom are able to explain the on-the-ground work of the program. These meetings have been very positive and have helped us begin to build an understanding of the program and sustainability needs. We look forward to doing these presentations for any of you who are interested as well.

Next week, principals who have beginning teachers in their building will be receiving a short survey on Induction. It will take about 5 minutes to complete. Please encourage your principals to complete this survey.

We are currently planning for the 2012-13 school year. It is important for us to be able to predict the number of beginning teachers that will need to be supported next year. We will be contacting assistant superintendents to get a preliminary projected number of openings in each district for next year.

Based on our current projection of beginning teachers next year, we are anticipating that we will need about 4 or 5 more Induction Coaches. Over the next couple of weeks, you will begin to see application and nomination materials for Induction Coach positions.

We are currently exploring opportunities to build further coaching capacity within districts across the state. We will have a limited number of spaces in our Induction Coach Training to include the following: cooperating teachers, mentors, teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and supervisors from institutions of higher education. Having other faculty members trained in the skills and strategies needed to successfully support teachers will allow districts the ability to support teachers beyond their first year, as well as to support educators on improvement plans. Interested candidates will need to go through the rigorous interview process to ensure that they possess the skills and characteristics required to be an effective coach, and they would also need to be available for training sessions throughout the school year.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda or Donna:

Hilda Potrzeba at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891

Donna Okrasinski at donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov or 222-8982

10. RIDE clarifies Support Professional Evaluation System timeline

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The Support Professionals Workgroup has been engaging with the design necessary to develop their evaluation model. This workgroup is made up of one representative from each of the following fields: librarian, reading specialist, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, speech-language pathologist, and school nurse-teacher.

The development of the Support Professional Model will continue until the winter of 2013. Field testing of this model will run from January 2013 to June 2013. Full implementation of the Support Professional Evaluation Model is expected to begin the 2013-14 school year.

11. District Evaluation Committees to be established by March 1

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards stipulate that all districts establish a District Evaluation Committee (DEC). Though districts have the latitude to create structures and mechanisms that meet individual contexts, the charge of the DEC

is to oversee the implementation of educator evaluation, ensure validity of the system, inform professional-development and strategic-planning decisions, and support the fairness and accuracy of the evaluation system. The expectation is that all DEC's are established and meeting regularly by March 1. Later this spring, RIDE will collect DEC membership and responsibilities information from all districts.

For further guidance regarding the DEC please refer to the following links:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/Docs/Educator%20Evaluation%20Standards%20Posted.pdf>

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Docs/District Committee Guidance.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Docs/District_Committee_Guidance.pdf)

12. Annual listing of textbooks due March 23

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

Each year, RIDE collects and distributes a listing of textbooks used in all public schools in the state. The purpose of this list is to meet the requirements of [General Laws 16-23-2](#) and [16-23-3](#), which provide for the loan of textbooks to students enrolled in nonpublic schools in Rhode Island.

LEAs are required to submit a complete listing of all textbooks planned for use during the 2012-13 academic year to RIDE, using eRIDE. Instructions for the use of the eRIDE system, including detailed information about uploading textbook titles and ISBN numbers, can be accessed at:

https://www.eride.ri.gov/default_secure.asp.

Additional information and an FAQ can be accessed at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/TextbookInventory.aspx>

All districts must update the complete list of textbooks for use in 2012-13 by **March 23**.

Any inquiries regarding the program should be addressed to Rosemary Burns, at 222-8483 or Rosemary.Burns@ride.ri.gov. If you have technical issues regarding the use of eRIDE, inquire at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov or 222-8400.

13. NECAP data corrections due March 9

Please see the following announcement from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness

Early this month, schools and districts received their NECAP results. It is important that school and district leaders review the data files to ensure its accuracy, as this data is

used for many public reports and in school and district accountability. School and district leaders should send requests for corrections to their NECAP file to Van Yidana at Van.Yidana@ride.ri.gov. All requests must be submitted by Friday, **March 9**. The accuracy of your district and school accountability reports depends upon the accuracy of your assessment data!

14. Survey on Rhode Island Model for evaluations to be completed by March 9 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE has developed an online survey for central-office administrators implementing the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System. The survey will ask superintendents and others questions about their experiences with the Rhode Island Model. We have been collecting feedback in our two early-adopter districts (Jamestown and Warwick), and this survey will help us capture a broader perspective. Responses to this survey will help us understand how practitioners experience evaluation and how the Rhode Island Model can be improved. The link for the survey is below, and we are asking all superintendents and heads of school to share this survey with appropriate staff. The deadline for completing the principal survey is Friday, **March 9**:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X9C8N9W>.

15. LEAs and principals asked to complete online needs assessment on data use by March 9 – Action Item

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE and its vendor Wireless Generation will be providing a year-long, job-embedded professional-development series on the use of data to drive instruction using Race to the Top funds.

To determine the most appropriate professional-development offering for each LEA, RIDE and Wireless Generation will be conducting a needs assessment with each LEA, with the survey results due on Friday, **March 9**. *Please follow the link(s) below to complete the needs assessment:*

For LEA representatives:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data_Use_LEA

For building principals:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Collaborative_Structures

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Data_Use_Schools

The needs-assessment survey will also be e-mailed directly to principals on **Monday** (February 27) as a follow-up. For planning purposes:

- ② LEA representatives and building principals will each be asked to complete a Data Use survey. This electronic survey will assess current data-use practices as well as sources of data available at the district and school levels. The survey should take approximately 1 hour to complete.
- ② Building principals will also be asked to complete a survey on existing collaborative structures. This electronic survey will help determine the extent to which educators are engaged in collaborative work within their schools; it is designed to be completed in 10 to 20 minutes.

To gain additional feedback on the professional-development series, RIDE and Wireless Generation will be holding regional focus groups on Wednesday, March 14, and Thursday, March 15. LEA representatives and principals, regardless of current data-use experience, will be invited to participate.

The results of the needs-assessment survey and focus groups are critical to planning an effective Data Use Professional Development series. If you have questions about the upcoming needs assessment and focus groups, please contact Lindsay.Wepman@ride.ri.gov for more information.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

16. President Obama releases annual education budget

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach

For the second consecutive year, President Obama released his annual budget proposal at an institution of education. Last year, he visited a middle school in Baltimore. This year, he visited Northern Virginia Community College's Annandale Campus. "An economy built to last demands that we keep doing everything we can to help students learn the skills that businesses are looking for," he said (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/13/remarks-president-budget>). "The budget that we're releasing today is a reflection of shared responsibility. It says that, if we're serious about investing in our future and investing in community colleges, new energy technology, and basic research, we've got to pay for it. And, that means we've got to make some choices."

The President is requesting \$69.8 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Education, an increase of \$1.7 billion (2.5 percent) from 2012. He is also requesting \$14 billion in one-time investments for key reform areas. These new investments will ensure that continuing investments in programs like Title I, special education, and Pell Grants are able to serve students and schools well.

Some budget highlights:

Raising up the teaching profession. The budget includes \$5 billion in competitive funding to support states and school districts as they pursue bold reforms to better recruit, prepare, support, and compensate teachers. It also establishes a new 25 percent set-aside of Title II funds (about \$620 million) that would go toward creating and expanding high-performing pathways into teaching and school leadership, reducing shortages of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) teachers, and investing in efforts to enhance the profession.

Increasing college affordability and quality. The budget includes \$1 billion for a new Race to the Top: College Affordability and Completion competition to drive reform at the state level and help students finish faster.

Continuing proven reform efforts. The budget includes \$850 million for a 2013 Race to the Top competition; \$150 million for the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund; and \$100 million (an increase from \$60 million) for the Promise Neighborhoods program.

These proposals come on top of continued investments, including \$14.5 billion for Title I, \$534 million for School Improvement Grants, and \$11.6 billion for special education grants to states.

Want to dig deeper? Among the resources posted online are a press release (<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-2013-budget-continues-investments-strengthen-workforce-a>); the budget summary (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget13/summary/13summary.pdf>); state-by-state tables (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/>) showing how education funds would be distributed under formula-based and selected student aid programs; and various budget fact sheets on cross-cutting issues (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget13/>). Furthermore, one can read the transcript, view the PowerPoint presentation, and watch the video from the Department's February 14 stakeholders forum at <http://www2.ed.gov/news/events/forum.html>.

From other state agencies:

17. Summer Dual Enrollment Scholarship applications due Friday, April 2

Please see this notice from the Office of Higher Education:

The Center for Excellence and College Readiness is pleased to coordinate the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education Summer Dual Enrollment Scholarship. This marks the fifth year that this scholarship has provided high-school juniors and seniors an opportunity to enroll in one college course during the summer at either Rhode Island College or the Community College of Rhode Island, at no cost. Please disseminate this scholarship application widely. School leaders and counselors are

encouraged to offer this to students who would benefit from the opportunity to “try” college during the summer.

The application is available on the Center for Excellence and College Readiness website:

<http://www.ccri.edu/cecr/> .

Applications are due Friday, April 2, by 5 p.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Geier, Ph.D., Director of Outreach and Policy at the Center for Excellence and College Readiness, at jgeier@ccri.edu or 787-8854.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>